

With everyone else saying no, Thorn Hill turns to library

Director asks library board to serve as adult education center's fiscal agent so classes can continue

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Mike Rosenstein is looking for someone to sign the dotted line by May 10.

That's the day bids are due for the \$270,000 grant that funds Franklin County's adult education pro-

gram at Thorn Hill Learning Center. The state grant funds one-third of the center's entire budget.

Without a new fiscal agent, the center's GED classes, college prep and family literacy classes could be up for grabs to another

bidder.

"Our backs are up against the wall," Rosenstein, the center's executive director, told members of the Paul Sawyer Public Library Board Wednesday.

He asked the library board to serve as fiscal agent for the

center, administering grants and signing payroll checks. Thorn Hill employees would become employees of the library, and Bluegrass Area Development District would provide accounting services at cost.

Discussions with the city

and county, Kentucky State University, Eastern Kentucky University and Bluegrass Community Action Partnership did not work out, he said.

"Everyone has wished us well, but not been willing to becoming our fiscal agent."

Board members didn't vote on the proposal, but instead set a meeting for next Tuesday to make a decision. They expressed support for Thorn Hill, but worried about the liability of running the center, and meeting

THORN HILL | BCTC not interested in running community side

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the guidelines for its numerous grants.

"I think it goes without saying that over the years, Thorn Hill has provided untold and immeasurable services to the community," said Mike Fields, president of the library board.

"I think everybody in this community realizes its value, and we want to do what-

ever we can to make sure they continue."

Bluegrass Community and Technical College already plans to bid for the Adult Education grant, Rosenstein said.

But BCTC isn't interested in running the community education program, and the center's employees would be let go. They could reapply for their jobs, but Rosenstein

says there is no guarantee they would get them.

"It's not a partnership," he said. "It is the creation of a brand new program under Bluegrass Community and Technical College, and it begins with the hiring of all new teachers."

The Franklin County Board of Education voted in November to end its 30-year role as fiscal agent for the

learning center when the financial year ends June 30. FCPS will no longer administer grants for Thorn Hill, or process its employees' payroll checks.

Board members voted last month to surplus the \$65,000 building, which houses a GED center, after school and summer programs and community education.

Superintendent Har-

rie Buecker said the district is still determining how it will sell the building. FCPS spends \$40,000 a year on maintenance and utilities there.

"That's a teacher that I wouldn't have to pink slip next week," Buecker said. "We're in that dire of straits at this point."

Maintenance costs could come from program funds,

if PSPL cannot pay that amount, Rosenstein said.

"As wonderful as the building is, if we don't leave here feeling confident about a fiscal agent, the building is unimportant," he said.

"Whatever it takes to get an agreement, I'll make everything else work."

The library board meets again Tuesday at 6 p.m. to discuss the issue.